

NOON.

The day hath reached the summit of its
 fate,
 Like some proud king at zenith of his
 power,
 Who mounts a height his kingdom wide to
 view,
 And takes his strength in one transcendent
 hour.
 Heals after realm about him lies serene,
 And all in his one vast and bright domain,
 A hundred cities, forest, field and stream,
 Wrought in a flood of light,
 The symbol of his might,
 The shining robe of his imperial dream.
 Even as he looks, behold! a shadow small
 Creeps round his throne, and lengthens
 steadily.
 He frowns, and lo! the shadow darkens all;
 His sword is out, and swift his motions
 flee,
 But as they ride the shadows follow fast;
 The realm of Noon is shattered and is past,
 While evening's lordling marches forth
 to war.
 And like a broken Lear,
 Upon his ready spear,
 The great king sinks beneath his fallen
 star.

—Chicago Record.

A PARSON ON A "BIKE."

BY BEN E. KEMPSON.

He came to us about the middle of
 the week. On the following Sunday
 he was to preach for us in the fore-
 noon, and in the afternoon at a small
 place about eight miles out in the
 country.

"It'll be a rather long walk for a
 hot day," he said to me after getting
 "the lay of the land." "I don't sup-
 pose I'd be very likely to catch a ride,
 would I? I don't feel able to hire a
 rig from the livery—I'm one of the
 poor ministers, you know," he added.
 He had but one eye, and when he
 wanted to make a remark impressive,
 or said something he had an idea was
 humorous, whose effect he wanted to
 observe, he had a trick of dropping
 his head in what might be called an
 insinuating fashion, and bring his
 one optic to bear on you from such an
 angle and in such a manner that it
 made you feel as if X-rays were con-
 centrated on you, and that your in-
 most thoughts were being laid bare
 before the intensity of his gaze, which
 always suggested to me the applica-
 tion of an optical corkerew.

Just then he happened to catch
 sight of my wheel.

"Got a bicycle, eh? Now, what's
 to hinder my going over to the other
 charge on that? I don't suppose
 you'd object to lending it?" There-
 upon he "drew bead" on me with that
 penetrating optic of his.

"You're welcome to the use of it," I
 said. I did not think of asking him
 if he was used to riding. I supposed
 he must be or he would not think of
 starting off on an eight-mile trip as a
 beginning. But on Saturday morn-
 ing I saw him looking the wheel
 over in a manner that made me think
 he had never had much to do with
 one. Therefore, after dinner, as we
 sat on the veranda, I asked him if he
 had ridden much.

"Never was on one in my life," he
 answered.

"Then I'd suggest that you prac-
 tice a little before attempting to make
 your trip," I said. "You've got to
 get somewhat used to a wheel before
 you can manage it."

"It looks easy enough," he said.
 "I've watched folks ride a good deal,
 and all they have to do is to keep it
 from tipping over and keep their
 feet going, so far as I could see. I
 should think anybody could do that."

"Better try it," I said.

"Well, I will if you think it is
 necessary," he said. He got up, took
 the wheel and started for the yard.
 He propelled it by the handle bars,
 and the first thing he knew the pedals
 came around and took him in the
 shins quite forcibly. He paused,
 brought his eye to bear on the wheel
 for a moment, and then held it off at
 arm's length until he was "in the
 arena."

Evidently the idea of failure had
 never once entered his mind. He
 seized the handle bars, got behind the
 wheel, put his left foot on the foot-
 rest, gave the thing a push and
 hopped after it a rod or two before he
 got into motion. Then he gave a
 leap, expecting to land in the saddle,
 but "servanting ambition had out-
 leaped itself" again, and he went over
 the saddle and pitched earthward
 somewhere in the vicinity of the front
 wheel. He got up after extricating
 his legs from the machine, with which
 they seemed considerably mixed up,
 and leveled his optic at me to see what
 effect his first attempt had on me.
 But I was sober as a judge, and he at
 once set about a second attempt. This
 time he succeeded in getting into the
 saddle, but the wheel had no motion.
 He kicked wildly about for an in-
 stant, while that awful wobble which
 presages coming disaster was going
 on, in a vain endeavor to get his feet
 on the pedals, and then—over went
 wheel and man with a crash that sent
 his stiff hat flying across the yard, and
 made things jingle generally. He
 got up slowly and rubbed one of his
 hips, and seemed lost in contempla-
 tion as he righted up his refractory
 steed of steel. Evidently he was pon-
 dering over the cause of his failure,
 for his face brightened, and he
 "at it again, as if he saw his
 own mistake."

He got in place, gave a start,
 and under motion,
 "at it again, as if he saw his
 own mistake."

He got in place, gave a start,
 and under motion,
 "at it again, as if he saw his
 own mistake."

elated him that he forgot the pedals,
 and the first thing he knew he was flat
 on his back again, with his new stiff
 hat crushed into hopeless flatness un-
 der him.

More attempts and more failures
 followed in quick succession. I have
 always felt that he must have been
 a strong believer in the theory of the
 "final perseverance of the saints," for
 he certainly persevered with a persis-
 tency that showed his "staying qual-
 ities," admirably. By and by he took
 off his vest. Presently cuffs and col-
 lar were discarded, and had any other
 portion of his raiment been remov-
 able without violating the rules of
 propriety I am confident that he
 would have divested himself of it. He
 had failed, so far, in the accom-
 plishment of his undertaking, but he
 was determined not to be conquered
 by a thing without brains, and he was
 stripping himself for mortal combat.

He seemed to have forgotten my
 presence. And I—lay back in the
 hammock and laughed so much that
 my sides were sore than his body was
 next day, I verily believe.

I think he kept it up for at least
 three hours. Once in awhile he had
 to pause and take breath. His
 clothes were wet with sweat. The
 perspiration ran down his face in lit-
 tle rills. But he was not yet ready to
 acknowledge defeat. He tried that
 wheel from all quarters. He strad-
 dled the seat and tried to get under
 headway by walking tiptoe and get-
 ting up motion in that way prepara-
 tory to getting control of the pedals.
 Then he got on the horse block and
 tried to mount from that position.
 Just about half the time, as nearly as
 I could calculate, he was either on
 his face or his back in the dust, or
 getting on his feet. Once in awhile I
 saw him rubbing what I presumed to
 be bruised places on his anatomy, and
 I noticed that he was evidently get-
 ting stiffer rapidly, as the encounter
 of mind and matter went on.

By and by he sat down on the horse
 block and seemed in deep thought.
 He looked that wheel over from all
 points. He pushed it back and forth
 far enough to make the pedals go
 around once and made calculations as
 to the position they ought to be in at
 the moment when the foot took them.
 Then he roused himself for the final
 encounter.

He decided to make this attack
 from the rear. He took hold of the
 handle bars, got the pedals in such
 a position that when the right one
 had made one revolution it would be
 about where his foot would strike it
 while on the down grade, provided all
 else went well, and then he was ready
 for the trial. He started; he made
 the leap; he came down squarely in the
 saddle, and, oh, victory! his right
 foot caught the pedal at the proper
 time and he went ahead without go-
 ing over. He seemed to feel that he
 had conquered at last, for he gave
 a little whoop of exultation, but just
 at that instant the front wheel began
 to kink and wobble in that utterly
 depraved way peculiar to front
 wheels at times, and the more he tried
 to steady it the more uncontrollable it
 got. It seemed to have the St. Vitus
 dance. All this time his right foot
 was clinging to the pedal with deadly
 desperation, while his left one was
 flying wildly round in space trying to
 find the pedal on that side of the ma-
 chine, while he was going ahead with
 sudden and unexpected shifts to all
 points of the compass. Then, all at
 once, the entire machine seemed to
 tie itself up in a knot for a moment,
 then it bucked like a mule for all the
 world, and the poor man was pitched
 head first into a great clump of bull
 thistles. They scratched him terri-
 bly, but he ought to have been thank-
 ful that they were there, for they
 broke the force of his fall. He lay
 there so long that I began to be
 alarmed, and went to his assistance.
 But before I reached him he strug-
 gled to his feet, corkscrewed me with
 a glare of awful intensity, but said
 not a word. He seized the innocent-
 looking wheel and dragged it to the
 veranda in a series of vindictive jerks,
 and deposited it there in silence.

Then he glanced at me again, but not
 one word escaped his lips. I have al-
 ways thought he dared not trust him-
 self to speak for fear he would give
 utterance to some of the thoughts
 that "arose in him."

The next day his nose had a great
 black and blue spot on it, and was
 swollen to twice its usual size. There
 was a bruise on one cheek, another on
 his neck and thistle scratches all over
 his face. He walked with great dig-
 nity—or difficulty—and seemed sub-
 ject to twinges of rheumatic pain
 whenever he sat down or got up. I
 took pity on him and hired a man to
 take him to his afternoon appoint-
 ment. He never even looked at the
 poor wheel after that. He utterly
 ignored its existence.—N. Y. Ledger.

One on Chicago.

Porkchoppe—Ah, here you are at
 last, Manhattan, I've been scour-
 ing Chicago to find you.
 Manhattan—Well, it needed it.—
 Town Topics.

—The remarkable echo at Eagle's
 Nest on the banks of the Killarney,
 Ireland, repeats a bugle call 100 times
 each clear and distinct.

THE MYSTERIOUS MESSAGE.

It Came to the Operator Via the Gas
 Pipe.

"On the night of the occurrence,"
 said the telegraph operator who had
 been requested to tell the story, "I
 had been reading one of those news-
 paper yarns which narrate in vivid lan-
 guage the trying experience of some
 poor cuss who is buried in the ruins
 or in prison or some other impossible
 situation and who saves himself by
 ticking a message on the wall or on a
 gas pipe or any old way that leads out
 to daylight and freedom, and my
 mind was considerably wrought up,
 for the story was scarce and very
 well told. It was about midnight
 when I finished it, and I at once be-
 gan to get ready for bed, thinking
 meanwhile what I would do if caught
 in such a box. As I was knocking
 around the room undressing, my at-
 tention was suddenly called to a queer
 knocking that didn't seem to be lo-
 cated anywhere at first, but shortly I
 thought it was from the gas pipe, and
 I went over and listened. I was right
 in my guess, and in a second more I
 detected a message in the peculiar
 ticking. 'Help! help!' it said: 'come
 quick, whoever you are!'

"There wasn't any going back on a
 warning like that, and forgetting in
 the excitement of the moment that I
 was about to become a character in
 the very kind of a story I had been
 reading, and, I may say, doubting, I
 broke in on the gas pipe with a metal-
 back hair brush for a sounder and
 asked the party for particulars. Im-
 mediately there came to me briefly
 the information that the sender was
 held a prisoner at No. 27 Verona
 place, not far from my flat, by some
 persons who would not stop at any
 crime to accomplish their purpose.
 In fact, they had informed the sender
 that if certain moneys were not forth-
 coming by noon the next day the
 sender would never be forthcoming
 again, or words to that effect. Also, in
 the name of heaven, I was begged to
 come at once with a strong force of
 police to the number given, as the
 persons were desperate characters."

"Ticking back word that I would
 go at once to the rescue, and telling
 the prisoner to keep up courage, I
 went for the police telegraph operator
 and an officer to verify what I had
 heard, and a party of five of us went
 in a hurry to No. 27. Placing the
 police front and back of the house,
 which showed faintly a light from the
 third-story windows, I went with the
 lieutenant of the squad to the door
 and rang the bell. It was evident the
 house was not asleep, for in a minute
 or two footsteps were heard hurrying
 along the halls and up and down-
 stairs, and then, after a moment's
 stillness, the front door was cautious-
 ly opened and inquiry made as to what
 was wanted. In an instant the lieut-
 enant had thrust his knee in the
 crack of the door and before the man
 inside knew what had happened we
 were in the hall and the officer had
 him by the neck.

"A minute later a friend of mine,
 living on the floor above in the same
 flat with me, rose from a corner and
 gave me a huge laugh, and then the
 whole house came down, and kept
 coming until the officer threatened
 to arrest the entire business for dis-
 orderly conduct. Quiet was restored
 on this threat, and the crowd in-
 formed me that the thrilling mes-
 sage had been sent to me from the
 room above my own by the occupant
 thereof, who had skipped and got
 around to 27 as soon as he could when
 he saw what a success his scheme was
 likely to be. The gang was waiting
 for me, and when we got into the
 house, of course, I was given a recep-
 tion worthy of the occasion. It also
 cost me the drinks, numerous, and
 many good chairs for all the people
 concerned in it, though the lieutenant
 assured me that he would arrest the
 entire lot for obtaining drinks under
 false pretenses if I said so."—Wash-
 ington Star.

Prefer Homely Girls.

It is pretty generally known that
 the big candy stores and drug stores
 which employ girls to attend the soda
 fountains in some of the large cities
 now seek girls who are not distin-
 guished for beauty, and that in many
 typewriting agencies preference is
 given to girls not called handsome,
 but little or nothing has been heard
 of any effort on the part of tele-
 phone companies in the same direc-
 tion. The sheriff of Augusta county,
 Va., however, as manager of the tele-
 phone exchange at Staunton, has ad-
 vertised for homely girls as telephone
 operators. His reasons have been
 vainly asked, and the puzzle deepens
 with the promulgation of the news
 that the girls employed in the ex-
 change marry soon after going there.
 What their voices are like is not told,
 and it is said that their photographs
 have been refused to curious corre-
 spondents time and again. It is to be
 noted that, according to the Gazet-
 teer, Staunton, with a population of
 less than 7,000, supports four insti-
 tutes for women and girls and a lunatic
 asylum.

—We cannot understand how any-
 body gets along without a pocket-
 knife.—Washington Democrat.

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